

# South Precinct Email Community Newsletter

October 23, 2006



Dear Community Friends:

## **Block Watch 101**

Over the past few months, I've had numerous conversations with folks regarding Block Watch. There seems to be some concern over what Block Watch is and confusion about what it is not. So, we present Block Watch 101: What Block Watch Is.

### **What Block Watch Is**



Block Watch is a national program that is based on the principle that neighbors working together are the first and best line of defense against crime. Seattle's Block Watch program began in 1972 and the police department's Crime Prevention Coordinators lend support to neighborhood block watch efforts. Roughly 30% of Seattle neighborhoods are currently involved in Block Watch, compared to a national average of around 10%.

Block Watch can be stripped down to three elements: awareness, communication and commitment to watch out for each other. Block Watch is about being aware of what's going on in the neighborhood. It's about communicating with each other and with police when you see something suspicious or that seems out of place for your block. And it's agreeing to keep an eye out for each other's safety and each other's property.

- Awareness - being aware of what's going on in your neighborhood. Being aware of who your neighbors are and getting to know them. Being aware of the public safety concerns – and working to address them.
- Communication - Communication with each other and Police. When you get to know your neighbors, when you become more aware, you're better able to communicate when something is suspicious or warrants a call to police. When you know each other, you become more *willing* to communicate about the suspicious or abnormal. How do you find out what's normal? Get out of your home and engage; get to know your neighbors, talk with each other and alert each other about unruly or suspicious activity.
- Commitment to watch out for each other - Just as you are more willing to communicate with people you know, you are more likely to be watchful for those with whom you've established a relationship. Think about those you know on your block or in your apartment or condo complex: Aren't you more likely to keep an eye out for them? Wouldn't you expect them to do the same?

Block Watch is really just an extension of what you are probably already doing on an informal basis, and what many neighborhoods have done for years. If there is some activity in your neighborhood that is unruly, doesn't fit or is suspicious (and only you would know what that might be for your neighborhood) communicate that with neighbors and with police. You tell your neighbors so they can be aware and watchful of the activity that caused your concern. You tell the police so that we can do something about it.

Block Watch involves commitment. It is a commitment to be concerned about your neighbor's property as well as your own, and a commitment that when you see suspicious activity, you will take action by calling your neighbors and 9-1-1 (when warranted).

Next Time, Block Watch 102 - What Block Watch is not.

Until Then, Take Care And Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator